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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable JEFF MERKLEY, a Senator from the State of Oregon.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Gracious God, our shelter in the time of storm, hold our Senators within Your providential hand, guiding them from perplexity to wisdom. Give them strength to overcome the challenges they face, enabling them to be true guardians of liberty. Lord, keep them faithful in service, inspired by the knowledge that in due season they will reap if they persevere. Give them a vision greater than they possess that they may see clearly what You want them to accomplish. Infuse them with the faith to realize that with You all things are possible.

We pray in Your great Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable JEFF MERKLEY led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. BYRD).

The legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, March 9, 2010.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable JEFF MERKLEY, a Sen-

ator from the State of Oregon, to perform the duties of the Chair.

ROBERT C. BYRD,
President pro tempore.

Mr. MERKLEY thereupon assumed the chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, following leader remarks, the Senate will turn to a period of morning business until 11 o'clock this morning. Senators during that time will be able to speak for up to 10 minutes each. The Republicans will control the first half and the majority will control the second half. Following morning business, the Senate will resume consideration of H.R. 4213, the tax extenders bill. There will then be a series of up to four rollcall votes in relation to amendments to the bill. Those votes will start at 11 o'clock. Following the series of votes, the Senate will recess until 2:15 p.m. in order to accommodate the weekly caucus meetings. At 2:30 p.m., the Senate will proceed to a cloture vote on the substitute amendment. As a reminder, the filing deadline for second-degree amendments is 12 o'clock noon today.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, the debate over health care has been going on for a long time now. It is easy to

lose sight of where we started, so I would just like to remind people today of what this debate was supposed to be about.

It was supposed to be about cost. This debate was supposed to be about bringing the cost of health care down, about keeping health care costs from bankrupting families and government. So if you are looking for a reason as to why Americans overwhelmingly oppose this bill and why Democrats are having such a hard time rounding up votes within their own party for this bill, it is because no one believes this bill will lower the cost of health care. It is that simple.

When you hear people talk about the cost of health care, they usually are referring to three things: the overall health care expenses Americans will have to shoulder if this bill passes, overall spending by the Federal Government on health care if this bill passes, and the amount of money people will have to spend on health insurance premiums if this bill passes. On all three counts, the bill the White House and its allies in Congress want us to vote for would drive costs up actually. The administration's own scorekeeper at the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services says overall health spending will go up by more than \$200 billion under this bill—overall health care spending up \$200 billion under this bill, according to the administration. The independent Congressional Budget Office says Federal spending on health care will increase by about \$200 billion over the next 10 years. CBO also says health insurance premiums for millions of Americans across the country will go up 10 to 13 percent as a result of all the new government mandates contained in this bill—and continue to rise at the current unsustainable rate for nearly everyone else, despite more than \$2 trillion in new government spending.

Another thing Americans are rightly concerned about is the debt. It is completely out of control. Some say this

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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